

## A Self-Presentational View of Social Phenomena

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Self-presentation is the use of behavior to communicate some information about oneself to others. The two main self-presentational motives are to please the audience and to construct (create, maintain, and modify) one's public self congruent to one's ideal. It is proposed that a wide range of social behavior is determined or influenced by these self-presentational concerns. Research evidence is examined to show the relevance of the self-presentational motives to giving and receiving help, conformity, reactance, attitude expression and change, responses to evaluations, aggressive behavior, self-serving and counter-defensive attributional statements, task performance, ingratiation, and emotion.

The present article interprets a series of social phenomena as caused or mediated by two main self-presentational motives, the motive to please the audience and the motive to construct one's public self. People use their social behavior as a means of communicating information about (or an image of) themselves to others. Such "self-presentation" is aimed at establishing, maintaining, or refining an image of the individual in the minds of others (cf. Goffman, 1959; Jones & Wortman, 1973; Schlenker, 1980). The intention behind self-presentation need not be conscious, and the impression need not be accurate (either objectively or in the self-presenter's own view).

There are two main reasons for engaging in self-presentation. The first is to obtain rewards. If an audience controls or dispenses one's potential rewards, one obtains the rewards by getting the audience to think favorably of oneself. The second reason is as a means of, substitute for, or prop to self-fulfillment. It has been claimed that people are motivated to become their ideal selves (Cohen, 1959; Rogers & Dymond, 1954). Along with the motivation to become one's ideal self, there may also be a motivation to convince others that one is like one's ideal self.

Self-presentation designed to gain re-

wards by influencing an audience is mainly guided by the audience's criteria of favorability and can be conveniently designated as "pleasing the audience." On the other hand, when self-presentation is guided by the desire to make one's public image equivalent to one's ideal self, it is the ideal self that is the criterion of favorability. The attempt to make one's public self congruent to one's ideal self will be designated here as "self-construction."

The attempt to please a particular audience is a familiar connotation of "self-presentation." The terms "impression management" and "ingratiation" are well suited to describe this form of self-presentation. The motivation may be ulterior, such as a particular benefit that the self-presenter wants from the audience; it may be a desire to be liked; or it may be the desire to win esteem, which may be beneficial in ways and situations that are not yet clearly foreseen. According to Jones and Wortman (1973), self-presentational ingratiation is an attempt to reduce dependency. Thus, the defining characteristics of audience-pleasing self-presentation are that it is an attempt to present oneself "favorably" according to the audience's values, it is specific to a particular audience, and it is motivated by some desire for rewards that the audience controls or dispenses.

The desire to be one's ideal self gives rise to motivations affecting both the private self and the public self. It causes individuals to want to believe that they are the way they

The author wishes to thank S. C. Berglas, D. K. Detterman, J. G. Hull, E. E. Jones, and P. A. Parmelee.

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would like to be. It may also cause individuals to want an audience to perceive them as being the way they would like to be. To some extent, these motives are independent—satisfying one will not necessarily satisfy the other. Still, there are presumably some relations between the private self-concept and the public image of self. Jones's (1964) concept of "signification" implies that if others perceive one as having a particular trait, this may help one to believe that one does indeed have that trait. For present purposes, the essential point is that people desire to be perceived as congruent to their ideal self-images.

Thus, self-constructive self-presentation derives from the motive to impress others in general (as opposed to a particular audience) with one's good qualities, and these "good qualities" are defined by the self-presenter's personal goals and ideals (rather than by the audience's wants and expectations). It probably is much less susceptible to variation than is audience-pleasing self-presentation as a function of audience, of dependency on the audience, and of situationally caused evaluation apprehension. Cross-situational consistency of self-constructive self-presentation derives from the fact that one's (desired) ideal self is relatively stable and unchanging; audience-pleasing self-presentation needs to be consistent only because of the fear of being perceived as unreliable or hypocritical.

Moreover, the hypothesis of self-constructive self-presentation provides a basis for understanding audience transfer effects. Audience transfer effects may be defined as effects in which the self-presentational consequences and implications of a person's interaction with one audience lead to changes in that person's self-presentation to a second, different audience. One illustration of audience transfer effects is the phenomenon of generalized image repair, in which damage to one's public self-presentation (such as a humiliation or embarrassment) is "repaired" with a different audience. Thus, people may feel that making a good impression on A may offset having made fools of themselves in front of B. Such a phenomenon can be understood as self-presentation only if one assumes that a person is fundamentally con-

cerned with the aggregate sum of other people's impressions of him or her.

The use of the term *self-construction* to denote one kind of self-presentational motive does not imply that the self is created only by impressing others. A "true," "real," or "private" self is constructed not by self-presentation but through one's choices and performances. Creating the self is a matter of self-presentation only insofar as it is concerned with establishing and maintaining one's *public* self, that is, the image of oneself that exists in the minds of others.

### *Operationalization*

The most common procedure for testing for self-presentational motives is by comparing two situations that are identical in all respects except that some circumstance is public in one situation but private in the other. Typically, something that happens to the subject will be known to other people (public condition) or will be known only to the subject (private condition); or, the subject's behavior will be known to others, or not. If public awareness makes people change their behavior, it is because they are concerned with what their behavior communicates to others. Similarly, anonymity removes one's concern with self-presentation because one's behavior cannot influence others' impressions if one is acting anonymously. Another (although slightly confounded) indication of self-presentational concerns is a change in behavior due to the expectation of future interaction.

Failure of such manipulations to produce an effect on any given social behavior constitutes nonsupport of the hypothesis that self-presentational concerns are at work. A word of caution, however, is needed. Laboratory subjects are generally distrustful of assurances of "privacy." They typically need extensive assurances of confidentiality in order to accept an experimental situation as private—which, after all, is quite justified because it is rarely private in fact. It is often necessary to be very thorough and explicit in assuring a subject that some behavior will be (and will remain) truly private.

In addition, the experimenter constitutes a real and important "public" to the subject.

If the subject believes that the experimenter is aware of some fact, then that fact cannot be termed private or confidential. Thus, for a "private" condition to be effective, the experimenter must assure the subject that the circumstances are and will remain known only to him or her and not to anyone else, including the experimenter.

Self-presentation can be concerned with pleasing the audience when different audiences elicit different self-presentational behavior (that is, behavior that differs in the image or information it expresses); when the behavior varies in proportion to the individual's evaluation apprehension or need for approval as situational factors; and when the self-presentation appears to be caused by a dependence on the audience. In addition, situations that are unusual and unforeseeable may emphasize audience-pleasing rather than self-constructive self-presentational concerns because they may not be relevant to the general public image that the person desires to create. Normally, however, the self-construction motive is relatively constant for a given type of situation, and it explains self-presentations that are not attributable to other concerns such as pleasing the audience. In particular, self-presentations that could not be expected to please the audience (cf. the sections of this article on reactance and aggression) can be attributed to self-constructive self-presentational concerns. Audience transfer effects are also evidence that self-presentation is concerned with constructing and maintaining the general public image of self.

The following nine sections of this article examine topic areas in social psychology to ascertain the importance of self-presentation in causing or mediating phenomena.

#### Self-Presentational Concerns in Specific Behavior

##### *Altruistic Behavior: Helping and Receiving Help*

Truly altruistic behavior would be motivated by concern for the well-being of others and, by implication, indifferent to one's own potential gain and benefit. Research evidence, however, has suggested that appar-

ently altruistic behavior is often influenced by other factors such as the attractiveness of the person requesting assistance (West & Brown, 1975) and whether the potential helper is in a hurry (Darley & Batson, 1973).

Satow (1975) demonstrated the influence of self-presentational concerns on helping behavior. Subjects were asked for donations that would be either public or private (secret and anonymous). The public donations were dramatically greater (indeed, averaging over seven times as large) than the private ones, implying that altruistic behavior is at least in part motivated by the desire to be recognized as a charitable and generous person.

One of the broadest models of helping was proposed by Cialdini, Darby, and Vincent (1973), who proposed that either a good or a bad mood can induce helping. They focused on the bad moods, and their "negative state relief" model regards helping as a way of counteracting a bad mood by making one feel good about oneself. Recently, Kenrick, Baumann, & Cialdini (1979) provided evidence that publicity is an important ingredient in children's acquisition of this pattern. They found that bad moods facilitated helping behavior in children only when the helping would be witnessed by an adult. An earlier study by Cialdini and Kenrick (1976) found some altruistic behavior under "private" conditions in adults. (One could argue that the privacy in that experiment was rather flimsy. Their experimenter repeatedly discussed the donation with subjects and then left them alone for 90 sec to donate. The subjects could well have expected the experimenter to ask them again about their donations.) Of course, Satow's (1975) findings indicated that publicity contributes to altruism in adults, so Cialdini and Kenrick's results do not disprove the importance of self-presentation in adult altruism. Kenrick et al. concluded that "the negative state relief model and the image repair model are in no way incompatible" (p. 752), which the present argument echoes.

Gottlieb and Carver (1980) noted that anonymity was a characteristic of many of the experimental procedures that have demonstrated the so-called bystander effect, in which the presence of a multitude of onlookers at an emergency actually *decreases*

the likelihood that anyone will intervene to aid the victim (Darley & Latané, 1968). Gottlieb and Carver effectively counteracted the bystander effect by eliminating this anonymity. In their experiment, as in the study by Darley and Latané (1968), subjects were physically separated and were involved in a discussion via an intercom system when they heard another subject (actually a tape recording) apparently have a seizure and ask for help. In this group of physically isolated, unacquainted people, subjects offered help more often and more rapidly when they expected to meet and talk with each other later than when they expected to remain anonymous. This finding implies that self-presentational concerns may contribute to a bystander's decision about whether to intervene in an emergency.

Schwartz and Gottlieb (1976, 1980) provided some evidence that the self-presentational aspect of bystander intervention may be concerned with pleasing the specific audience that is present (other possible bystanders). Their model held that evaluation apprehension influences the decision of whether to intervene. In support of this, they demonstrated that cues about what others felt was appropriate behavior in the emergency strongly influenced helping behavior (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1976; see also Darley, Teger, & Lewis, 1973). In a subsequent study, Schwartz and Gottlieb (1980) added that when the audience appears to think helping is *not* appropriate, removal of self-presentational concerns (by anonymity) can facilitate helping. In that situation, pleasing the audience would presumably involve not helping, and the relevance of self-presentational concerns appeared to determine that behavior.

The implication—that the self-presentational concern involved in bystander intervention is to please the specific audience—is consistent with Darley and Latané's (1968) discussion of emergencies. They pointed out that most people rarely encounter actual emergencies. As noted earlier, long-term (self-construction) self-presentation goals are not likely to encompass situations that are extremely unusual and unforeseen. Consequently, a bystander in an emergency is less likely to be aware of the implications for

constructing his or her public self than aware of the immediate, short-term demands and expectations of the others who are present.

If emergencies are rare, opportunities to do favors are common. Consequently, one would expect self-construction concerns to be more relevant to doing favors than to bystander intervention. Steele (1975) telephoned various homemakers to request a favor. For some, the request had been preceded by another (ostensibly unrelated) call during which the homemaker's reputation in the community was described in unfavorable terms. This latter treatment had the effect of a significant and substantial increase in the subject's willingness to perform the favor. Despite the traditional wisdom that flattery is the most effective means of gaining compliance (cf. Jones & Wortman, 1973), subjects in this study complied more after learning that their public images were bad rather than good. In a similar vein, Apsler (1975) found that subjects were more willing to do someone a favor after they had been publicly embarrassed. Although neither Apsler nor Steele used an explicit public/private manipulation, their findings can be interpreted in terms of self-presentation. They imply that damage to one's public image leads to a motivation to perform a public, socially desirable action. (Because of the lack of a public/private manipulation, it is not clear whether the function of the altruistic act is to restore a private mood, a public image, or both.) It does not appear to matter, however, whether the public that requests or observes the altruistic act is the same one that witnessed the humiliation. If the helping in the Apsler and the Steele studies is to be interpreted as self-presentation (and the results of Satow and others do attest to the relevance of self-presentation to helping behavior), then one must regard these as audience transfer effects. The image that is repaired is not the one held by the specific audience but the individual's generalized public image. Thus, altruistic behavior in general may relate to concerns with self-presentation as self-construction.

Another approach to the study of human generosity is to allow a subject to allocate money among himself or herself and other subjects. Several studies have shown that



such allocations are influenced by whether they are made publicly or privately (Kidder, Belletirre, & Cohn, 1977; Reis & Gruzen, 1976; Shapiro, 1975). In particular, Reis and Gruzen (1976) showed that subjects adjusted their allocations not merely according to *whether* someone else would know but also according to *who* would know. After a task performance, the subject was told to divide the money in any fashion among himself or herself and three other subjects who had contributed uneven amounts of work to the group's performance. When the subject had to report the allocations to the experimenter, these allocations conformed to the norm of *equity* (payment proportional to input). When the subject had to report them to the other subjects, the allocations conformed to the norm of *equality* (equal payment for all, regardless of performance). When total confidentiality could be presumed, the self-allocation made by the subject tended to be disproportionately large. Thus, norms advocating generous and fair treatment of others are most scrupulously followed under conditions of public surveillance. Moreover, the audience-specific nature of these results indicates that pleasing the audience is a relevant self-presentational concern. It seems possible that self-construction is also relevant to such behavior, but there is as yet no support for that hypothesis.

Paulhus, Shaffer, and Downing (1977) furnished blood donors with pamphlets that described either the benefits of this act to the *donor* or how charitable and humanitarian blood donors were. Subjects in the latter condition expressed greater willingness to donate blood again than did those in the former condition. This finding can be interpreted in a self-presentational context: People donate blood to get others to perceive them as good people rather than for their own tangible benefits. Of course, their finding could also be interpreted in terms of private egotism and self-esteem.

Self-presentation is apparently no less important to the recipient of help than to the helper. Whereas the helper desires to be perceived as good and altruistic, the recipient of help desires to avoid being seen as dependent and incompetent. The frequent resentment toward the helper (cf. Gergen, 1974)

and quite possibly the restructuring of attitudes by the recipient of help so that the latter comes to believe that the help was deserved (Gergen, Morse, & Bode, 1974) very likely spring from the humiliation (i.e., the self-presentational damage) experienced by the recipient. By asserting that the aid was deserved, the recipient implies that he or she is not helpless or incompetent and subsisting on others' handouts but rather is merely someone accepting what is rightfully his or hers.

Tessler and Schwartz (1972) showed that subjects are more willing to seek help on a task when the instructions establish a context that enables them to save face, that is, when failure in general is publicly ascribed to external causes. Although their procedures did not distinguish between public and private concerns, their findings are consistent with the self-presentational argument advanced here. Broll, Gross, and Piliavin (1974) compared help that was offered with help that was available but had to be requested. They reasoned that asking for help entailed the greater self-presentational risk of humiliation, as when a person needing welfare assistance "associates asking for help with personal inadequacy [and] feels that the social worker or others will view him or her as incompetent and dependent" (p. 254). Subjects in their experiment received more help and expressed greater attraction to the helper when the help was offered than when it had to be requested.

Finally, the importance of the "reciprocity" norm (Gouldner, 1960) in the psychology of receiving aid may well also involve self-presentation. The central finding in this context is that people are more attracted to the helper when they are able to reciprocate the help than when they are not (Gross & Latané, 1974). Why should the potential to reciprocate make receiving help more palatable? Obviously, doing a favor for one's former benefactor is unimpeachable public evidence that one is not chronically dependent and incompetent.

Receiving help is of special interest to self-presentation research because it appears to entail a conflict between long-term and short-term self-presentational goals. To the extent that self-construction is dominant,

recipients of help normally desire to present themselves as not being weak, helpless, and dependent; the immediate ulterior motive of obtaining help, however, is best served by presenting oneself as weak, helpless, and dependent. The evident importance of the former motives testifies that self-constructive self-presentational concerns are indeed relevant to the psychology of receiving help.

Many factors influence the giving and receiving of help, including mood (Cialdini, Darby & Vincent, 1973), the type of request (Cunningham, Steinberg, & Grev, 1980), personality factors (Tessler & Schwartz, 1972), and modeling (Bryan & Test, 1967). Some helping does undoubtedly occur in private and anonymous situations (e.g., Hodgson, Hornstein, & LaKind, 1972; Hornstein, Masor, Sole, & Heilman, 1971) and thus has motivations other than the concern with making a good impression. Still, the importance of self-presentational motivations should not be overlooked. By engaging these concerns, helping behavior can be increased; by respecting them, people can be induced to accept help more willingly and more happily.

### *Conformity, Influence, and Reactance*

It has long been known that people conform more readily to the opinions and expectations of others when these others are watching than when they are not (Argyle, 1957; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In their extension of the Asch (1951) conformity studies, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) compared public (face-to-face) and anonymous situations in which subjects had to express judgments after learning that the rest of the group had concurred in a judgment that was in fact wrong. The subjects' conformity was greater in public than in private situations, suggesting that it was mediated by self-presentational concerns.

Research on deindividuation has contributed additional evidence. When individuals are deindividuated, their behavior is still in a public setting but their long-term or ongoing self-presentational concerns are irrelevant because they feel they are not individually identifiable, so their reputations will not be affected by their behavior. Deindi-

viduation has thus been characterized both by a reduction of inhibitions (Cannavale, Scarr, & Pepitone, 1970; Festinger, Pepitone, & Newcomb, 1952; Zimbardo, 1970) and by a reduction of conformity (Maslach, 1974; Singer, Brush & Lublin, 1965).

There is a certain irony in this pattern of findings. The term *deindividuation* connotes a *loss* of individuality, and yet deindividuation apparently *increases* the person's readiness to behave in an autonomous fashion, according to his or her own individual inclinations and beliefs rather than in conformity with others. The root of this seeming contradiction is that deindividuation does not deprive people of their individuality but rather of their public identity. The concern over public identity is apparently an important factor in conformity and social inhibitions.

Of course, deviants are often censured and punished, whether in subtle or in overt ways (Darley & Darley, 1976; Freedman & Doob, 1968; Schachter, 1951). Most people presumably fear social rejection and punishment, and this fear may well contribute to their reluctance to go against the group's expectations when the group is watching. The emphasis here on self-presentational concerns does not deny the importance of fears of rejection and punishment. It suggests only that in these various cases the person is typically not afraid of some specific danger or censure but is more generally afraid of the variety of potential consequences of having an unfavorable public identity. These potential consequences, of course, include overt negative sanctions by the group as well as possible dislike by individual members of the group.

Another irony in the relationship between publicity and conformity is that although people apparently conform and yield to influence because of concern with the opinions of others, it is not desirable to be recognized by others as being conforming or yielding. Cialdini, Braver, and Lewis (1974) demonstrated that people perceive someone as more intelligent if he or she is not persuaded than if he or she yields to influence—with one exception. The person who is doing the persuading perceives the target as more intelligent if the target does yield to persuasion.

Braver, Linder, Corwin, and Cialdini (1977) carried this phenomenon one step further and showed that people are aware of these contingencies and will adjust their admissions of yielding to influence so as to make the optimal impression (of intelligence). Subjects in this study admitted the most yielding to a persuasive speech when they were in the presence of the persuader alone. They admitted the least yielding when the persuader was absent but when an observer was there, who of course would presumably view yielding as an indication of gullibility and lack of intelligence. In the presence of both persuader and observer, subjects admitted an intermediate amount of yielding. These findings support the view that conformity under surveillance is born out of concern with maintaining a desirable public image for oneself rather than out of specific fear or threat of punishment.

The role of self-presentation in conformity and influence is thus apparent. In order to interpret these findings in terms of specific self-presentational concerns, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of conformity. There is conformity to the expectations of particular groups or persons, such as the expectation that one's spouse will come along on visits to one's mother; and there is conformity to general social norms, such as those regarding appropriate places to exercise bodily functions. Self-presentation that is concerned with pleasing the immediate audience usually exhibits both kinds of conformity because that is what the immediate audience usually wants and expects. Nevertheless, self-presentation as a means of constructing and maintaining the public self will tend to show only the second kind of conformity. It is probably safe to say that most people (except perhaps the misanthrope, iconoclast, and psychopath) conform to most general social norms most of the time because it is undesirable to build a reputation of doing inappropriate things. It is also undesirable, however, to build a reputation of yielding to changing, contradictory, and arbitrary influences; such a reputation portrays one as weak, gullible, and unreliable. Thus, although it is fine to have the reputation of being "proper" and conforming to most social norms, it is not fine to have the

reputation of conforming to whatever individual expectations and influences happen to arise.

The conformity in the Asch (1951) and in the Deutsch and Gerard (1955) studies was apparently conformity to particular expectations rather than to general norms. After all, the general norms for appropriate behavior for laboratory subjects are to give one's own best answer, not to express a wrong one because of fear of embarrassment. Thus, the self-presentational concern that was operative in those situations was probably concern with pleasing the immediate audience. (That interpretation is further supported by Asch's findings that the behavior changed when the audience changed, such as by not being in unanimous agreement with the wrong answer.) The issue in deindividuation studies was primarily conformity to general social norms; for example, it is not normally appropriate to derogate one's parents or to use profanity in the company of strangers (Festinger et al., 1952; Singer et al., 1965). The self-presentational concerns that were eliminated in those studies, resulting in uninhibitedness and nonconformity, could therefore be of either the audience-pleasing or the self-constructive type. The concept of deindividuation seems to imply that particularly the long-term (self-constructive) concerns are affected, but there is no proof yet that this is so.

The Cialdini et al. (1974) and Braver et al. (1977) studies of yielding to persuasion show the conflict between the two self-presentational concerns over conformity to specific, individual influences. Their procedures included two audiences: the "persuader," as the audience with specific demands and expectations, and the "observer," who did not have such demands and expectations. The persuader was thus clearly connected with the situational, audience-pleasing self-presentational goals, whereas the observer (representing observers in general) was more connected with the self-constructive self-presentational goals. Yielding to influence in general makes a bad impression and is therefore bad for one's general public self, although a specific audience may be pleased at someone yielding to *its own* influence because that is flattering and gratifying to the

audience (Sigall, 1970). In that case, the audience may view the yielding as indicative of being intelligent or open-minded. Still, one might expect that if the audience would view yielding even to its own influence as yielding (rather than as an intelligent, open-minded reappraisal of one's beliefs), the self-presentational benefits would be lost, and yielding would not occur. That brings up the issue of reactance.

It was suggested earlier that the view of conformity as deriving from self-presentational concerns and the view of conformity as deriving from fear of negative sanctions are not entirely incompatible. They do, however, furnish contradictory predictions regarding one type of situation. The more overt and threatening the external influence attempt is, the greater the compliance with it should be—if conformity springs from fears of rejection, censure, or other punishment. In other words, threat-induced conformity should increase as threat increases. Nevertheless, if the primary factor is concern with one's public image, then conformity should *decrease* as overt pressure and threat increase. This is because conformity under these conditions would make it obvious that one is yielding and conforming, which is bad for one's public image (Cialdini et al., 1974). The empirical evidence supports the latter prediction: Increasing threat leads to decreasing conformity (Worchel & Brehm, 1971).

The last finding was derived in the context of research on reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), according to which individuals seek to assert and maintain their behavioral freedoms. Therefore, Worchel and Brehm (1971) did not interpret their findings in terms of self-presentation but rather in terms of maintaining freedoms, which they regarded as an effectance motivation (White, 1959). According to this view, reactance is derived from the motivation to achieve and maintain effective control over one's environment.

Recent evidence, however, has questioned the effectance view of reactance and suggested that reactance may derive from self-presentational motivations. Heilman and Garner (1975) cited earlier evidence that complying with threats implies that one acknowledges having a status that is inferior

to the threatener (Deutsch & Krauss, 1960, 1962; Kelley, 1965) and went on to propose that the reactance phenomena may be a way of signaling one's refusal to accept this inferior status. Heilman and Toffler (1976) exposed subjects to threatening influence from an experimental confederate. Subjects were then given a choice, which should have reduced their reactance according to the "effectance" view. Reactance, however, was not reduced unless the confederate had consented to allow the subject free choice. The authors concluded that the reactance they observed was derived from a desire to project an image of autonomy to the threatening agent.

Brehm and Mann (1975) disputed the self-presentational view of reactance by finding no difference between public and private expressions of reactance. Baer, Hinkle, Smith, and Fenton (1980), however, proposed that there had been a potential response bias in Brehm and Mann's procedures and conducted a more thorough test of this matter. They found reactance in public attitudes but not in private attitudes, thus supporting the self-presentational interpretation. Moreover, it had been shown that reactance is diminished if the person has exercised the freedom shortly prior to its being threatened (Brehm, 1966; Snyder & Wicklund, 1976). Baer et al. found that reactance was diminished only when this prior exercise of freedom was public and not when it was private.

Baer et al.'s (1980) results provide strong support for the view of reactance as derived from self-presentational motivations. In their words, "People are more concerned with managing the impression of autonomy than they are with actually maintaining autonomy" (p. 416).

Thus, evidence supports the view that self-presentational concerns mediate and determine how people respond to external pressures and influence. The risk of violating norms and public expectations appears to be a self-presentational risk, and so people tend to conform to protect their public images. Self-presentational concerns (both with pleasing a specific audience and constructing the public self) usually favor conformity to general social norms of appropriate behavior.



ior. To the extent that people are inclined to break those norms, they appear to be more likely to do so when their self-presentational concerns are removed, such as when the people are anonymous or deindividuated, than when these concerns are involved. Specific influences of particular persons create potential conflict among the two self-presentational concerns. In order to please the audience, one would conform to such influence, but in order to construct a reputation for being independent and consistent rather than vacillating and gullible, one would not conform to (all of) those influences. Therefore, conformity to specific influences is most likely to occur when the self-presenter is alone with the audience that is trying to exert influence and when yielding to influence can appear to indicate intelligent or open-minded reappraisal of one's position. The attitude of the person exerting influence, or the presence of an additional (noninfluencing) audience, however, can cause yielding to seem like mere capitulation, which is bad for one's (self-constructive) self-presentational concerns. Under those circumstances, reactance and general resistance to influence occur. In reactance, the person becomes willing to displease the audience (by refusing to do what the audience wants) in order to construct the public image of self as independent and autonomous.

#### *Attitude Expression and Change*

The term *cognitive dissonance* implies a state of tension and conflict within the individual psyche. The phenomena associated with cognitive dissonance refer to changes in behavior and expressed attitudes that occur when individuals behave in ways that are contrary to their values and opinions or when individuals confront other inconsistencies in themselves (Festinger, 1957). These phenomena have generally been interpreted as indicating that the human mind is unwilling or unable to tolerate certain kinds of apparent inconsistency. (The research emphasis has been on psychological inconsistency rather than on strictly logical inconsistency.)

One exception to this view was a radical formulation by Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma (1971) in terms of impression man-

agement (self-presentation). Unfortunately, their argument and subsequent experimental evidence (Gaes, Kalle, & Tedeschi, 1978) seemed to some dissonance theorists to hold that cognitive dissonance was something between a mere response-bias effect and a little white lie the subjects used to make the experimenter think well of them. This interpretation created some obstacles to the acceptance of the impression management view. In particular, Worchel and Cooper (1979) cited evidence that cognitive dissonance is characterized by physical arousal (Zanna & Cooper, 1974; Zanna, Higgins, & Taves, 1976), thus intrapsychic tension, to refute the idea that cognitive dissonance is nothing more than a quirk of self-presentation.

The present argument attempts to reconcile these views. The evidence does indeed imply that cognitive dissonance is an upsetting and motivating state that is characterized by physical arousal. This arousal, however, does not derive from any innate inability of the mind to cope with inconsistency. Rather, it derives from self-presentational concerns. People fear the negative labels—such as “hypocrite,” “liar,” and “two-faced”—that are attached to persons who behave in ways that are contrary to what they have asserted their feelings to be. Inconsistent behavior risks damage to one's self-presentation, and that is ample reason to become upset or aroused. In short, *inconsistency by itself is not arousing. Telling lies is arousing.* Lying is particularly arousing when done by choice for an inadequate or inconsequential reward because that implies a dispositional willingness to lie. Dissonance effects thus may arise from the desire to maintain a reputation of honesty and consistency (that is, of opinion integrity); such a desire belongs in the self-construction category of self-presentational concerns.

Self-presentation was in fact closely linked to cognitive dissonance from the outset. In the best known case study of dissonance, Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) studied a small, reclusive group who anticipated the end of the world on a certain date. When the apocalypse failed to materialize, the group decided that it had saved the world. That alone should have been enough

to establish cognitive equilibrium, but the group did not stop there. Rather, the previously reclusive members suddenly began a campaign to spread the group's beliefs to the general public. Thus, frantic self-presentational activity was the result of this famous instance of dissonance. Little attention, however, was paid to the implication that if self-presentational activity can resolve dissonance, perhaps the conflict underlying dissonance has to do with self-presentational concerns.

The first laboratory demonstration of cognitive dissonance also involved self-presentation. The method used to arouse dissonance was to induce subjects to lie to other subjects for a small reward (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). If the subjects were later accused of being deceptive or hypocritical, they could presumably justify their behavior if the reward were large (\$20), but to do that for a small reward implies a dispositional willingness to deceive. Consequently, the subjects had to change their attitudes so that what they said had not been a lie, at least as far as their future public statements were concerned.

The Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) experiment had two experimenters, one of whom administered the manipulations while the other collected the dependent measures. The fact that the dissonance effect obtained suggests that it may have been an audience transfer effect (although subjects could suspect that different experimenters might later compare notes, in which case the separation of the audiences would be lost). This further supports the view that the self-presentational concern related to cognitive dissonance is one of self-construction.

Of course, one could ask why a subject consents to perform the counterattitudinal behavior in the first place. Certainly, self-construction would be best served by refusing. Money is not the only reason subjects consent because many studies (e.g., Zanna & Cooper, 1974) have not involved paying the subject for writing the counterattitudinal essay. It appears that subtle pressures exerted on the subject get the subject to comply. In a sense, the subject complies to please the experimenter. Thus, the decision to engage in counterattitudinal behavior may in-

volve a conflict between the self-presentational concerns of pleasing the experimenter and of constructing the public self. Once the subject has performed the behavior (thereby pleasing the audience), the self-constructive motivations need to be accommodated. Dissonance-reducing behavior may be that accommodation.

Carlsmith, Collins, and Helmreich (1966) replicated and extended this procedure to include conditions in which subjects wrote anonymous essays with the same deceptive message. Dissonance effects obtained only when the subjects gave in person the false description of the task to someone else and not when their self-presentations were protected by anonymity.

Helmreich and Collins (1968) produced strong evidence for the importance of self-presentational concerns in mediating cognitive dissonance. Their subjects made counterattitudinal speeches that were recorded, allegedly for use in persuading others in a research project. The speeches of half of the subjects were identified with the subject's name, face (videotape recording), hometown, and departmental major. The speeches of the other half were anonymous, recording only the subject's voice (on audiotape) and no biographical information. Dissonance effects were observed only in the former condition. Thus, again, under conditions of anonymity (which remove self-presentational concerns), cognitive dissonance did not appear.

Gaes, Kalle, and Tedeschi (1978) also found that anonymity removed the cognitive dissonance effect. Moreover, they used a "bogus pipeline" (Jones & Sigall, 1971) with half of their subjects in the attempt to force them to introspect and report "true" attitudes, and these did not show the usual dissonance effect even in the "public" identification conditions. This strongly supports the view that the appearances of cognitive dissonance are mediated by self-presentational concerns.

The relevance of the payment (for counterattitudinal behavior) to self-presentation concerns has been shown by Schlenker, Forsyth, Leary, and Miller (1980). Working from the view of attitude change as a tactic to protect and enhance one's public identity

(Alexander & Knight, 1971; Schlenker & Schlenker, 1975; Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971), these authors reasoned that the payment for counter-attitudinal behavior could have either of two public connotations. It could function as a testimony to the level of the individual's personal responsibility for his or her behavior or it could seem to be a bribe. In their experiments, the cognitive dissonance effect obtained only in the former case. When the payment was presented as a bribe, subjects sought to defend their moral images by indicating that they had not compromised themselves for money, especially if the payment was large (which makes the appearance of bribery all the more convincing). Consequently, the larger "bribes" led subjects to change their attitudes more than did the smaller ones, presumably to show that they had not lied for the money.

Additional evidence indirectly supports the self-presentational view. Adelman and Brehm (1976) had subjects perform counterattitudinal behavior and then asked them to recall their initial attitudes. As in an earlier study by Bem and McConnell (1970), the subjects retrospectively distorted their initial attitudes to give the impression that they had not changed much. Adelman and Brehm, however, also showed that subjects could recall their initial attitudes accurately if they were given sufficient incentive to do so. This finding implies that subjects distorted the attitudes they expressed in order to manage the impression of being consistent, which is the essence of the self-presentational view.

Lepper, Zanna, and Abelson (1970) suggested that once a person has completed the cognitive mechanism of reducing dissonance, it is not "reversible," that is, the final attitude cannot revert back to the initial attitude. Subsequent work, however, showed that dissonance reduction can be reversed if the public commitment is removed (Wilhelmy, 1974; Wilhelmy & Duncan, 1974). This, too, indicates that what binds the person to his or her postdissonance attitude is self-presentational concerns because removing these concerns causes the attitude to revert to its original position.

To summarize the evidence, then, it appears that any manipulations that remove

self-presentational concerns from the situation also remove the phenomena of cognitive dissonance. This does not necessarily imply that cognitive dissonance has no intrapsychic aspect. Rather, it suggests that the reason people experience dissonance and consequently alter their behavior is that they fear the potential damage to their reputations that could follow an exposition of their inconsistent behavior. This is also consistent with the general implication that the self-presentational concern that is most relevant to dissonance phenomena is that of self-construction. It does not seem that all of the dissonance results can be explained on the basis of the subjects' desire to please the experimenter (or anyone else); rather, dissonance may be considered a person's attempt to adjust his or her general public self so as to be compatible with the counterattitudinal behavior.

The preceding does not imply that pleasing the audience and other short-term (situational) concerns are irrelevant to the expression of attitude. The self-presentational view holds that the precise attitude a person expresses on an occasion is a compromise between self-construction concerns (which identify particular positions as the ones the person identifies with in the long run) and various self-presentational demands of the situation. A desire to please a particular audience, such as a potential employer or in-law, may cause people to modify the opinions they express. In fact, the attitude expressed may become a pawn in the service of making an impression that has little to do with the actual content of the attitude, as research on anticipatory attitude change has suggested.

Research on attitude change discovered by accident that subjects who anticipate an attack on their beliefs tend to change these opinions before they are exposed to the attack (McGuire & Millman, 1965; McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962). This finding of anticipatory attitude change sparked a line of research studies. It was shown that these anticipatory changes are apparently not a result of cognitive inconsistency but rather a defense against the possibility of seeming gullible (Cooper & Jones, 1970). The shifts were shown to be essentially moderating

shifts toward neutral positions (Cialdini, Levy, Herman, & Evenbeck, 1973). As Cialdini et al. (1973) pointed out, moderate positions are the easiest to defend, the most culturally desirable ("open-minded"), and the least likely to make enemies. Another way of expressing this is that moderate positions offer self-presentational advantage (i.e., the best chance for looking good and impressing others). Hass and Mann (1976) showed that anticipatory attitude change vanished when the self-presentational concerns were eliminated, supporting the view that the anticipatory shifts are caused by self-presentational motivations. Thus, anticipatory attitude change appears to be another phenomenon in which the attitudes that persons express become tools designed to achieve self-presentational advantage.

Finally, Cooper and Jones (1969) showed another use of attitude expression in the service of self-presentation. They confronted each subject with a confederate who held opinions that were identical to those of the subject but who behaved obnoxiously to the experimenter. Subjects changed their opinions in order to dissociate themselves publicly from the obnoxious person. No such shifts were found on private measures of attitudes. Thus, again, the public expression of attitude was used as a means of conveying some image of oneself (that had little or nothing to do with the actual attitude) to an audience.

### *Receiving Evaluations*

For a long time, the behavior of a person after receiving an evaluation was understood as mediated by the effects of that evaluation on his or her self-esteem (e.g., Aronson & Mettee, 1968; Dinner, Lewkowicz & Cooper, 1972; Jones & Schneider, 1968; Sigall & Gould, 1977; Walster, Berscheid, Abrahams, & Aronson, 1967). Although self-esteem may be a factor, evidence has accumulated stressing the importance of self-presentation in understanding behavior that follows receiving evaluations. After all, the literal effect of evaluations is to tell people what someone else (the evaluator) thinks of them—thus, to tell them something about

their public images. Self-esteem is affected by an evaluation only if the recipient accepts it and revises his or her self-concept accordingly. In short, an evaluation necessarily affects one's self-presentational concerns but does not necessarily affect one's self-esteem.

The distinction between pleasing the audience and constructing the public self does not appear to be reflected in the research on receiving evaluations. Both concerns are probably relevant. Evaluations in general tell a person what his or her public self is like. Evaluations from important audiences tell people whether they are pleasing those audiences.

Of course, self-presentation does best to begin its work before the evaluation becomes known. As Jones and Berglas (1978) suggested, it is much more credible to discredit an evaluation before one receives it rather than after one has heard the bad news. Schneider (1969) and Eagly and Acksen (1971) explored subjects' responses to evaluations as a function of whether they expected further evaluations or not. People with a preliminary success had best be modest if further evaluation is expected, or else the further evaluation could prove highly embarrassing. Only if no further evaluation is expected can people feel free to be very positive about themselves. On the other hand, people with a preliminary failure can only describe themselves favorably if there is the possibility that a future evaluation might exonerate them. Schneider's and Eagly and Acksen's results supported this self-presentational model.

Schlenker (1975) had subjects describe themselves to other members of a group, ostensibly as a means of getting acquainted prior to task performance. He manipulated both how well the subject could expect to perform on the task and whether the performance results would be public or private. When the performance was expected to be public, the subjects described themselves consistently with their (manipulated) expectations of performance level. Yet when the performance was expected to be anonymous, self-presentations were all positive and self-enhancing, even if the preliminary feedback had been unfavorable. Thus, only the like-



likelihood of publicly identifiable, disconfirming evidence will prevent people from presenting themselves in a maximally favorable light.

Finally, Baumeister and Jones (1978) provided clear evidence of the importance of self-presentational concerns in reaction to evaluations by showing that behavior following such an event depends on whether the evaluation was public or confidential. Subjects in that experiment apparently felt constrained to be consistent with their reputations, as created by (randomly generated) public evaluations; they did not conform so closely to the private evaluations. Moreover, following a private bad evaluation, subjects sought to compensate for it by presenting themselves favorably on traits unrelated to the evaluation; again, no such effect followed a private evaluation. If responses to an evaluation were mediated by its effects on self-esteem rather than by its implications for self-presentation, no such differences would have obtained.

Thus, an evaluation is primarily an event that concerns self-presentation. Although responses to it may indeed be influenced by the recipient's self-esteem, no response to an evaluation should be interpreted without considering its self-presentational context, unless perhaps the recipient is assured of the evaluation's total and permanent confidentiality.

### *Aggression*

Some theories depict aggression as an explosion of impulses that build up inside the psyche, often from instinctual roots (Freud, 1920; Lorenz, 1966) or from frustration (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). Others see aggression as a set of behavior that is acquired through modeling and reinforcement (Bandura, 1973). It is hard to see any room for self-presentation in these theories.

Nevertheless, even if one accepts the view of aggression as an outburst of instinctive or behavioral patterns, one can still ask why some people appear to have weaker inhibitions and controls concerning aggressiveness than do others. Toch (1969) sought to answer that question empirically by producing

a typology of violent people. The three most common types he identified, which accounted for more than half of his sample, all reflected some self-presentational motivations. The most common type of violent people fear that others (in general) will regard them unfavorably, so they respond violently to real or imagined insults or challenges, even relatively minor ones. A second type appear to seek violent encounters to demonstrate their strength, courage, and toughness. A third type consist of people who have social roles or identities that require aggressive activity, such as leader or strong-arm person in a gang. In other words, they have the reputation of being aggressive, and they need frequent public demonstrations to maintain this reputation. Thus, Toch's findings suggest that a chronic inclination to violent behavior is often associated with motivations connected with one's public identity and reputation. Contrary to what one might have expected, these people did not appear to enjoy violent behavior for its own sake; rather, they seemed drawn to it because of its significance for their public identities.

Violence is rarely an effective means of pleasing others. It is therefore not surprising that the self-presentational concerns reflected in Toch's categories appear to involve self-construction rather than pleasing an audience. Only members of the third category (e.g., leaders of street gangs) could be said to please anyone by being violent, and in their case it is ambiguous whether their violence is a means of maintaining their role and identity or of fulfilling the group's expectations, or both. In the majority of cases where self-presentational factors are apparent in aggression, it is likely that the main concern is with constructing the public self rather than pleasing anyone.

It has often been suggested that aggressive behavior in children may be a means of getting attention from a potential audience. Erikson (1968) carried this line of thought further in his study of juvenile delinquents. He concluded that the motive for violent and antisocial behavior in such persons is often to establish that they are *not* what society expects them to be—to establish “negative

identities," in Erikson's term. Erikson's suggestion calls for an expansion of self-presentational theory. Human self-presentational behavior may seek to deny some image of oneself rather than to affirm such an image. Again, though, aggression is a means of ("negative") self-construction rather than of pleasing an audience.

Several experimental studies of aggression have used self-presentational manipulations. Zimbardo (1970) showed increased aggressiveness as one consequence of deindividuation. This suggests that one factor that restrains people from harmful and sadistic behavior is the concern that such behavior will damage their reputations. Removal, by deindividuation or anonymity, of these self-presentational constraints appears to remove the inhibitions against aggression as well. (Of course, the uninhibiting effects of deindividuation can pertain to prosocial behavior, too, as suggested by Johnson & Downing, 1979, and by Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980.) As noted earlier, though, deindividuation does not distinguish effectively between concerns with pleasing an audience and with constructing the public self. Refraining from aggression may therefore derive from either type of self-presentational concern.

The deindividuation findings suggest that self-presentational concerns play a role in the inhibition and prevention of aggression. Of course, self-presentational concerns can *increase* aggression too, as implied by the Toch (1969) findings mentioned earlier. Brown (1968) added a self-presentational aspect to the Deutsch and Krauss (1960) trucking game paradigm. The subjects were exploited in a first game and then received feedback from an audience that emphasized either their "playing it straight" (and thus looking good) or their humiliation by the other (and thus being made to look "like a sucker"). The subjects then had an opportunity to retaliate in a later game, but the retaliation also involved substantial costs to the subjects themselves. The results showed that subjects would retaliate despite costs to themselves when they thought they had suffered self-presentational damage, much *more* so than when they believed that the

audience regarded them favorably. Brown's results testify to the importance of self-presentation in revenge behavior: A person will forgive and forget a hurt much more easily than a humiliation. Again, though, increasing aggression does not appear likely to please an audience. The vengefulness of Brown's subjects is probably attributable to pride, which belongs to the self-construction category of self-presentational concerns.

One study did suggest that aggression may be increased by a desire to please an audience, if the audience clearly seems to endorse aggressive behavior. (Such an audience is probably quite unusual, of course.) Borden (1975) gave subjects cues that the observer to an experiment either favored aggression (i.e., was a karate instructor) or disapproved of it (i.e., was a pacifist). Subjects were significantly more aggressive in front of the karate instructor than in front of the pacifist. This result could alternatively be interpreted as the result of cognitive changes produced by aggressive cues (Berkowitz & Geen, 1966). Nevertheless, a cognitive change produced by cues would be expected to persist beyond the removal of the cue, whereas self-presentation ends when the audience leaves. Borden's finding that the observed differences vanished when the observer departed midway through the experiment thus tends to support the self-presentational interpretation.

It is probable that there are many factors at work in aggressive behavior, including many that do not relate directly to self-presentation. The present argument wishes to suggest only that communicative goals can play a role in the production and inhibition of aggression. Self-presentation may help to reduce aggression either through the desire to please a specific audience or through the desire to maintain a favorable reputation for oneself in general. When self-presentational factors increase aggression, it seems usually to be because of the desire to protect, restore, or enhance one's general public self-image.

Still, there is ample room for further research on the role of the self-presentational concerns in aggression. If self-presentation in aggression does indeed derive from concerns with self-construction, then audience

transfer effects should obtain. In other words, research should examine the role of self-presentation in displaced aggression.

In addition, it may be worth noting that the lone exception to the otherwise dismally nonsupportive record of the "catharsis" hypothesis involved public circumstances. Fromkin, Goldstein, and Brock (1977) found that frustration-induced aggressiveness could be reduced if the subjects learned of some suffering of the frustrating agent (that is, the catharsis effect). This suffering in their experiment involved a public censure. The subject's frustration was also a public matter, in that it was deliberately and individually caused by another person. Future research may determine whether self-presentational concerns can facilitate catharsis.

Moreover, "anger" is commonly treated as a mediating variable in aggression research. In laboratory research, anger is often created by having the future aggressive target first deliver a bad evaluation to the subject (e.g., Baron & Bell, 1976; Donnerstein, Donnerstein, & Evans, 1975). It has already been argued that self-presentational concerns are of central importance in determining reactions to evaluations. Future research on aggression should consider the self-presentational context of the "angering" evaluation and what the subject may seek to communicate by an aggressive retaliation for such a humiliation. In particular, some paradigms have the subject receive shocks from a confederate as a punishment for poor performance (thus an evaluation) and later deliver shocks to the same confederate in evaluation of the confederate's work (e.g., Berkowitz & Geen, 1966). By delivering many shocks to the confederate, the subject can imply that the confederate's work is poor, suggesting that the confederate was not qualified to evaluate the subject. The self-presentational damage caused by the confederate's earlier evaluation is thus discredited.

### *Attributions*

Research has shown that subjects prefer to make internal attributions for success and

external attributions for failure (e.g., Fitch, 1970; Luginbuhl, Crowe, & Kahan, 1975). This pattern has been labeled that of "self-serving" attributions because the person accepts credit for success but refuses the blame for failure. Recently, however, several theorists have begun to ask whether the "self" that is thus "served" is the public or the private self (Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980; Bradley, 1978; Frey, 1978; Weary, 1980).

Bradley (1978) observed that all research supporting the notions of defensive or self-serving attributions involved the subject in *public* performance with *publicly* known outcomes. Moreover, the subject's attributions were also public in that the experimenter was generally expected to examine them. Bradley's conclusion was that "self-serving attributions may be viewed as public self-presentations designed to maximize public esteem" (p. 66). Thus, people who balk at declaring themselves responsible for their recent public failure may be doing so out of face-saving concerns rather than necessarily expressing their most sincere and considered private opinion.

The essence of Bradley's (1978) argument is that performance outcomes have implications for one's self-presentation, so publicly expressed attributions are statements designed to minimize the damage and maximize the benefit for one's public image. This enabled Bradley to explain the finding of "counterdefensive" attributions (Ross, Bierbrauer, & Polly, 1974), in which subjects accept blame for failure but modestly deny credit for success (contrary to the usual self-serving pattern). Bradley noted that the subjects in the Ross et al. (1974) experiment expected further evaluations. Citing evidence by Schlenker (1975) that the anticipation of public evaluation causes self-presentations to become cautious and modest, Bradley argued that the counterdefensiveness findings "suggest that when faced with a future performance where failure is possible, individuals will make seemingly counterdefensive attributions . . . in the attempt, perhaps, to avoid the embarrassment resulting from public invalidation of a self-presentation that is too positive" (p. 66).

Arkin, Appelman, and Burger (1980) tested a hypothesis derived from Bradley's (1978) suggestion that the expectation of additional evaluation by others could reverse the self-serving pattern. They found self-serving attributions among subjects who expected no further interaction, but there was a reversal of this pattern among subjects who were high in social anxiety and who anticipated having their performances evaluated by experts. Moreover, they found that bogus pipeline measures (which are less easily influenced by self-presentational concerns than are paper-and-pencil measures) tended to offset the self-serving attributions. Their results supported the self-presentational explanation of self-serving attributions.

Additional evidence has supported the self-presentational explanation of attributional statements. Weary (Bradley) herself provided strong support by showing that they obtained following public but not private outcomes (Weary, 1980). Subjects who received failure feedback made more defensive attributions when an observer and the experimenter had monitored their outcomes than when no one had paid any attention to their outcomes. Thus, the self-serving pattern appears to depend on publicity.

Frey (1978) showed that subjects' evaluations of a test they had taken were affected by whether they were public or private. In fact, he found that both the publicity of the outcome and the publicity of the subsequent attributional statement influenced the evaluations expressed by the subject. The self-presentational context (i.e., the audience's knowledge) thus had a strong effect on the attributions made by the subject.

Finally, Tetlock (1980) showed that in the situations examined by Ross et al. (1974) to demonstrate counterdefensiveness, people who make such attributions will in fact be viewed more favorably than will people who make self-serving attributions. Thus, sometimes modesty is better for one's self-presentation than self-aggrandizement is. If counterdefensiveness is a tactic of self-presentation, it is an effective one.

Moreover, if counterdefensiveness is indeed a self-presentational tactic, Tetlock's (1980) results suggest that it is a means of pleasing the audience (rather than of self-

construction). It is tempting to observe that counterdefensiveness in general might be incompatible with the goals of self-construction because one does not establish a favorable reputation by blaming oneself for failure and denying success. Tetlock's results, however, have only indirect relevance to the issue of self-presentational motivations for counterdefensiveness, and the other findings do not seem to indicate clearly which sort of self-presentational concern is at work. Protecting oneself against future public evaluations (Arkin et al., 1980; Bradley, 1978) may be a matter of protecting one's general public image or of protecting a particular audience's good impression of oneself.

It appears that success and failure have effects on self-presentation. When people are then asked to allocate responsibility for their outcomes, they are in effect being invited to redefine their self-presentational impact. Such an invitation of course provides a good opportunity either for face-saving (after failure) or for emphasizing one's credit and worth (after success). The evidence suggests that the self-serving and counterdefensive patterns of attributional statements should be understood in that context.

### *Task Performance*

At first thought, one might expect self-presentational concerns to be irrelevant to task performances. There is evidence, however, that in some situations self-presentational concerns and motivations can influence performance level. Indeed, it is likely that some kinds of performance pressure are in fact derived from self-presentational concerns. Pressure may be created by the desire for a specific performance level in order to enhance one's reputation or to please an audience.

Social facilitation theory (Zajonc, 1965) holds that the presence of other people emphasizes the dominant response. Well-learned behavior is facilitated, whereas learning is impaired by the presence of others. According to Zajonc, the effects are due to increased drive and arousal occasioned by the presence of others.

Obviously, self-presentational concerns are one potential source of this drive or arousal.



Several studies have suggested that the concern with being evaluated by the audience is one mediator of "social facilitation" and have shown that blindfolded or uninterested bystanders do not produce social facilitation (Cottrell, Wack, Sekerak, & Rittle, 1968; Paulus & Murdock, 1971). Henchy and Glass (1968) provided additional support for the "evaluation apprehension" interpretation. They found that social facilitation was stronger when the audience was composed of experts who were there to evaluate the subject's performance than when the audience was there merely to observe (which, in turn, produced more social facilitation than in subjects who were alone). They also found social facilitation in subjects who performed alone but whose performance was being recorded for subsequent evaluation. In the latter condition, social facilitation appeared as a result of anticipated evaluation despite the physical absence of other persons.

Other studies have suggested that some degree of social facilitation can be produced without evaluation apprehension (Haas & Roberts, 1975; Rittle & Bernard, 1977; Zajonc, Heingartner, & Herman, 1969), although perhaps not as much as when evaluative concerns are relevant (Haas & Roberts, 1975). Still, the evidence indicates that concern with an audience's evaluation is an important contributor to social facilitation. Evaluation apprehension is obviously derived from self-presentational concerns; the importance of self-presentation in response to evaluations has already been argued. Although the mere presence of others may produce some drive—due perhaps to concerns with sex, competition, and the like—it appears that the *evaluative* presence of others produces even more drive, which is probably due to concerns with self-presentation.

In most cases, self-presentational concerns motivate a person to perform as well as possible. The question of whether people are ever motivated to perform *below* their best, however, has also received some attention. Aronson and Carlsmith (1962) suggested that people will try to perform poorly when they expect poor performance because doing well would create cognitive dissonance. Difficulties in obtaining conceptual and even

exact replications of this effect, however, have led other researchers to wonder what situational variables can produce such a motivation to confirm an expectancy of failure (Brock, Edelman, Edwards, & Schuck, 1965; Cottrell, 1965; Lowin & Epstein, 1965; Ward & Sandvold, 1963). One suggestion explored by Sigall, Aronson and Van Hoose (1970) was that performance would be poor when success is linked with an undesirable trait. Unfortunately, their procedures failed to distinguish between public and private motivations, so it remained unclear whether the relevant motivations concerned self-presentation or self-concept maintenance.

Baumeister, Cooper, and Skib (1979) compared public and private awareness of an expectation of poor performance. Subjects in their experiment were told that they were expected to perform poorly because of a personality trait they had. For half of the subjects the trait was presented as desirable, whereas for the other half it was presented as undesirable. Subjects confirmed the expectancy of poor performance only when it was public and was (publicly) linked to the desirable trait. Thus, it appears that self-presentational motivations mediate performing poorly in response to an expectancy of poor performance. Task performance can become a mere tool in the service of self-presentational goals.

It could be speculated that the phenomenon of learned helplessness is influenced by self-presentation. "Learned helplessness" describes the pattern that when animals experience uncontrollable failure, their subsequent performance is inferior (Maier, Seligman, & Solomon, 1969; Overmier & Seligman 1967; Seligman, 1975). When this paradigm was first applied to humans, however, the opposite result was found—humans performed better after experiencing uncontrollable bad outcomes (Roth & Bootzin, 1974; Thornton & Jacobs, 1972). Other studies have suggested that the usual learned helplessness pattern *can* be obtained in humans (e.g., Roth & Kubal, 1975). It is quite plausible, however, that self-presentation plays some role in determining whether uncontrollable bad outcomes lead to performance increments or decrements. The subsequent

performance may be the person's response to being perceived by others as helpless. By the same token, performance decrements due to working under a label that connotes inferiority or incompetence ("self-induced dependence;" Langer & Benevento, 1978) may be mediated by the individual's belief that he or she could (or has) become publicly perceived as inferior or incompetent. Still, it is left for future research to determine the relevance of self-presentational concerns to learned helplessness and self-induced dependence.

### *Interpersonal Attraction and Ingratiation*

Self-presentation is important in winning the affection of others. Indeed, ingratiation is defined as "influencing a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities" (Jones & Wortman, 1973), which is very similar to a definition of self-presentation. Ingratiation is, of course, mainly connected with the self-presentational concern to please a particular audience, not with the attempts to construct a generally favorable public self. The literature on ingratiation has detailed the strategies and problems involved in attracting others (Jones, 1964; Jones & Wortman, 1973). Clearly, there is no need for reinterpretation or argument to establish the role of self-presentational factors in ingratiation.

Although the object of ingratiation is defined in terms of convincing another person of one's attractive qualities, the decisive issue in an ingratiation attempt often turns out to be convincing the other person about one's motives and intentions (Jones & Wortman, 1973). Ingratiation is thus a special instance of self-presentation in which one tries to present an attractive image of oneself but at the same time seeks to deny that that is what one is trying to do. Jones and Wortman's (1973) concept of the "ingratiator's dilemma" encompasses a wide variety of circumstances in which self-presentational motives must be concealed in order to be effective.

### *Emotion*

The relations between self-presentation and emotion have not been extensively re-

searched. Regarding the effects of emotion on self-presentation, one can only speculate. Because of the short-term nature of emotion, emotion might be expected to accentuate the short-term self-presentational concerns. Thus, emotion might increase people's tendency to do things that will please others who are present at the time but be regretted later as potentially damaging to their reputations. Very strong emotions may result in behavior that is indifferent to self-presentational concerns.

The effects of self-presentation on emotion have received some attention. Obviously, to the extent that people care about their public images, they will become elated or upset at their self-presentational outcomes. In discussing the effects of mood on helping, Kenrick, Baumann, and Cialdini (1979) argued that self-presentational events may be a major source of moods that facilitate helping behavior.

There is as yet rather little evidence about the role of self-presentation in producing emotion. Nevertheless, one study that has shown some influence of self-presentational behavior on emotion was conducted by Lanzetta, Cartwright-Smith, and Kleck (1976). They asked their subjects to suppress or to exaggerate the expression of the pain they felt when receiving electric shocks. Contrary to the view that suppressing an emotion intensifies it, they found that the degree of emotion—according to physiological measures—conformed to the public expression. This suggests that when a person has a motive to express a particular emotion (or lack thereof), his or her internal state will cooperate and furnish the desired level of emotion. The public expression can help to cause the emotional state.

Although it is common to consider emotion as originating in the private, internal state of the individual and proceeding from there to public expression, Lanzetta et al.'s (1976) findings suggest (but cannot be said to prove) that the emotion may sometimes proceed in the reverse direction, from public expression to internal state. Baumeister and Cooper (1981) carried this a step further. Their subjects were told that a particular emotion was expected of them. When appropriate attributional criteria were met, the

subjects did appear actually to have that emotion. Still, considerably more research is needed to establish whether and under what circumstances an emotion may arise because it is called for by self-presentational motivations.

### Conclusion

It has been proposed here that self-presentational concerns and motivations play a central role in determining conformity and in determining whether people yield to the influence of others or do the opposite of what others attempt to induce them to do; in mediating the expression and change of attitudes, especially in attitude change following counterattitudinal behavior; in determining how people respond to evaluations; in eliciting the self-serving and counterdefensive patterns in the interpretations that people express following success and failure; and, of course, in influencing interpersonal attraction. In addition, self-presentational concerns have been indicated as relevant and sometimes central in producing helping behavior and in determining the level of task performance and, possibly, in determining emotion.

The general notion of self-presentational motivation is that people attempt to present themselves as favorably as they can (that is, safely from disconfirmation; Schlenker, 1975, 1980). Most researchers who have discussed their results in self-presentational terms have used that concept (e.g., Arkin et al., 1980). The present article proposed a distinction between the two main self-presentational concerns, pleasing the audience that is present and constructing one's general public self. These concerns appear to overlap and have some similar goals. Thus, both types of self-presentational concerns appear to promote helping behavior and to promote conformity to general social norms. Other situations, however, provide a conflict between the two self-presentational concerns. Pleasing an audience may entail conforming to its expectations, submitting to exploitation, yielding to influence, or otherwise acquiescing; such behavior can run contrary to the general public image the person desires to project. Phenomena such as reac-

tance, aggression, refusing help, and dissonance can be interpreted as showing the importance of the self-construction self-presentational concern when in conflict with the possibility of pleasing the immediate audience.

The hypothesis of opposed self-presentational motives helps to explain a variety of seemingly contradictory sets of findings, such as that people yield to influence (as in conformity studies) and that people refuse to yield to influence (as in reactance studies). The conflict between pleasing the immediate audience and constructing one's public self can be seen in the choices people make about whether to accept help, whether to yield to influence and threat, whether to stand by one's counterattitudinal behavior, whether to aggress, and whether to make counterdefensive (self-blaming) attributional statements. These choices appear to depend in part on factors that alter the relative importance of the two self-presentational motives.

Although the distinction between these two concerns is a promising candidate for future self-presentation research, consideration must be given to ways in which they might resemble each other operationally. The absence of audience transfer phenomena may not be a reliable indicator of the absence of concerns with self-construction. Certain audiences may have special value or meaning for constructing certain identities, and other audiences (e.g., an audience composed of people who are much younger than the self-presenter) may not matter to an individual, even for his or her general public image. Also, people need friends and are therefore dependent on others for friendship; nevertheless, there is a wide range of social identities one can choose and still have friends, so the dependency alone does not completely determine the self-presentation. Self-construction concerns help decide which of the various possible social identities is chosen.

Other possible categories of self-presentational concerns deserve mention. A woman who acts as if she is cold and insensitive in order to discourage unwanted romantic attentions is neither constructing an idealized image of self nor pleasing her audience (the

suitor). Thus, there are particular ulterior motives that occasionally require a strategic self-presentation that does *not* derive from either of the two most common self-presentational concerns. Instead of pleasing the audience, some other manipulative effect on the audience is sought. Another alternative category of self-presentation would involve situations in which it is to the individual's advantage to present himself or herself as honestly and as accurately as possible, such as when discussing one's symptoms with a physician or therapist.

The importance of self-presentational concerns may well be culturally relative. As has frequently been observed, a distinguishing feature of our society is that individuals look outside of themselves, rather than looking inward, to find the criteria of their worth. The predominant political and religious ideologies of the West, from Christianity to Marxism, define the meaning and purpose of an individual's life by his or her relation to entities that are external to the individual, whether these be a god, a means of production, a humanitarian "cause," or whatever. These reflect the basic attitude that a person alone has no intrinsic value; rather, the person is in a permanent state of evaluative dependence on external entities.

Considerable room remains for future research on self-presentation. As noted above, the importance of self-presentational motivations in general for several phenomena (such as learned helplessness, aggression, emotion, and psychological pressure) needs further investigation. The distinction between the two major self-presentational goals also requires more research. Audience transfer effects require increased systematic study, based on comparisons between confidential or private conditions and conditions with multiple audiences. In addition, some investigation is needed to establish what situational factors increase or decrease the importance of the self-presentational concerns, both singly and jointly. In other words, what determines behavior when self-presentational motives conflict with other motives or impulses? The relation of personality factors to self-presentational motivations also ought to be explored. At present, it is unwarranted to assume that all people have identical (or

even essentially similar) self-presentational goals and motivations. The individual's personality structure may help to predict which self-presentational goal is dominant—for example, protecting oneself from potential embarrassment as opposed to stressing one's responsibility for potential success; appearing to be a "regular type" as opposed to seeming unusual and unique; or seeming to need social support, affection, or love from others as opposed to appearing to be a self-sufficient and self-reliant loner. Future research may establish that the presence or absence of certain personality factors may be associated with particular self-presentational motives.

Finally, the issue of deceptive self-presentation and being an impostor deserves some attention. People who present themselves in a false fashion accept some risk of being found out, which would result in at least some humiliation and possibly much worse. What can cause people to accept such a risk? A study of deception in self-presentation also could shed much light on the relation between self-concept and construction of the public self. It makes no sense to engage in deceptive self-presentation as a means of bolstering or confirming one's self-concept.

Social psychology has long recognized and emphasized the ways in which people seek to obtain information from the environment, such as by social comparison processes (Festinger, 1954), by attributions (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967), in achievement motivation (Atkinson & Feather, 1966), or in the process of gaining control over the environment (White, 1959). Self-presentation theory asserts that much human behavior can be understood as being the result of the individual's attempts to *communicate* information rather than to seek it.

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Received April 22, 1981 ■